

# Using Game as an Educational Phenomenon in Foreign Language Education of Adults (Practical Instructions)

## ABSTRACT

This review paper is dedicated to the learning game as an educational phenomenon in foreign language education of adults.

In **introduction** is underlined that gamification becomes one of the main trends in language education not only of children but of adults as well. Game is a central subject of the author's recent research works, including a monograph about game in foreign language education on the base of Russian language.

In **research findings** a general definition of game in language education is given. A conception regarding practical foreign language education with active use of game activities is generally presented. Learning game is an important part in the learning system of language education of teenagers (12+) and adults. According to this conception the following proportion about activities in language teaching process is recommended: 20% learning time – for using practical educational methods (observation, explanation, demonstration, conversation etc), 30% learning time – for game activities and 50% - for traditional language and speech exercises in combination with innovative technologies (project activities, portfolio etc). Using game in teaching process is active if it takes an average of 30% learning time. The author gives an explanation about relevance of this proportion. Useful practical instructions for using different game activities at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels of foreign language teaching to adults are listed.

In **conclusion** the author generalizes that learning game in the foreign language learning process is a real challenge to the intellect and emotions of adult students. Game activities stimulate not only speaking or writing skills but cognitive, creative, social and intercultural skills as well. The game is a valuable educational phenomenon which has to be actively used in foreign language education of adult students.

*Key words: foreign, language teaching, game activities, adults, instructions*

## Introduction

Game is an important educational phenomenon, especially in contemporary foreign language education of adult students. Gamification became one of the main trends in language education not only of children but of adults as well. Game is a central subject of our recent research works [1,2,3,4]. In our opinion learning game in teaching languages is not an additional but necessary component in language teaching process which we have to combine with traditional teaching methods and activities in a relevant way. We are grateful to the Russian prof. E. Passov who has written a preface of our book about game [4], to my Bulgarian colleagues assoc. prof. Zh. Ilieva, prof. V.Vesselinov and other colleagues from different countries for their support of our ideas about game and its great educational value for the contemporary language learning practice. [5,6]

## Research findings

In this article we present a definition of learning game and give some practical instructions for using game activities in foreign language teaching to adults. Our definition of game in foreign language education is the following:

44 Game is one of the forms of organization of teaching process which transforms education into  
45 live communication. Game is a necessary component of foreign language education systems not only  
46 for children but for adult students as well. In a teaching practice the game is realized through game  
47 technologies, language games, playful exercises, techniques, devices and on the base of special  
48 playful organization of the lesson. In a teaching process we use learning game for training language  
49 material and active relax. Game activities develop speaking, writing, communicative and creative  
50 skills. Game gives diversity and positive emotional background to the teaching process, increases its  
51 effectiveness and supports students' interest in foreign language and culture.

52 This short general definition collects an essence of the game as an educational phenomenon  
53 in foreign language education.

54 In our book about game we present a conception regarding practical foreign language  
55 education with active use of game activities on the basis of Russian as a foreign language. [4]  
56 Learning game is an important part in the learning system of language education of teenagers (12+)  
57 and adults. According to this conception the following proportion about activities in language teaching  
58 process is recommended: 20% learning time – for using practical educational methods like  
59 observation, explanation, demonstration, conversation etc, 30% learning time – for game activities and  
60 50% - for traditional language and speech exercises in combination with innovative technologies like  
61 project activities, portfolio etc.

62 It is necessary to explain what the reason to recommend such a proportion of learning  
63 activities in the teaching process is. In our opinion this way the golden ratio, well known from the  
64 ancient times is kept. The Suggestopedia method of Dr. Georgi Lozanov known all over the world is  
65 based on this important principle. [7,8] Bulgarian scientist defines the principle as "the most stable  
66 psychological criterion of good balance". [7:153] According to the "golden ratio" the proportion  
67 between parts of a whole has to come near the number 0.618. The proportion presented above - 20%:  
68 30%: 50% of learning time corresponds to the "golden ratio" principle: if we divide one of these  
69 numbers by the next one the result is approximately 0.61. [7:149] This result is the reason to evaluate  
70 such a proportion as balanced and useful for practical foreign language teaching of adult learners.  
71 Using game in teaching process is active if it takes an average of 30% learning time. For example if a  
72 foreign language course takes 90 hours, at least 27 hours of them have to be dedicated to game  
73 activities: game technologies, playful exercises and language games relevant to define the level and  
74 character of language education.

75 Further we recommend some practical instructions about game activities suitable for  
76 elementary, intermediate and advanced levels in foreign language education of adults.

77 At the elementary level we recommend:

- 78 • Exercises for fast and correct pronunciation and expressiveness on  
79 the basis of verses, anecdotes and [tonguetwisters](#)
- 80 • Using teacher's instructions like: *Listen and do! Listen and draw! Is it*  
81 *thru or false?*
- 82 • Making short simple dialogues using a small ball, other objects and  
83 flashcards in order to stimulate speaking
- 84 • Playful exercises using pantomime, for example on the topic  
85 professions, animals, emotions etc (*Who am I? or How do I feel?*)
- 86 • Construction of simple riddles by students using known words and  
87 simple grammar
- 88 • Solving simple crosswords
- 89 • Work with puzzles including words, phrases and short text based on  
90 learnt lexical and grammatical material
- 91 • Making associogramms and clusters with familiar lexis
- 92 • Playing relevant language games
- 93 • Reading in chain with an element of competition in a group/ between  
94 groups
- 95 • Singing popular songs using karaoke etc.
- 96 • Playful techniques and devices: using pictures and flashcards for  
97 stimulation of speaking; using gestures and pantomime; reading with change of

98 rhythm and dynamics; chain reading; collecting parts of phrases or a text;  
99 competitive element in exercises (ex. *Who says this correctly and quickly? Who*  
100 *writes more words beginning with B in a minute?*); when correcting the mistakes  
101 the teacher uses the “echo” technique (he or she says the correct form in a  
102 quieter voice), a technique of question repetition which includes a correct form  
103 etc.

104 At the middle stage of language teaching (at high school, university and language courses) we  
105 recommend:

- 106 • Using exercises including speed, correctness of pronunciation and  
107 expressiveness of performance (on the basis of verses and [tonguetwisters](#))
- 108 • Role-playing dialogues using flashcards
- 109 • Making associogrammes on the basis of a key word
- 110 • Working with more difficult riddles
- 111 • Working with quizzes about foreign history, geography, culture
- 112 • Singing songs in karaoke
- 113 • Giving more difficult teacher’s instructions (including nonstandard  
114 ones with familiar lexis)
- 115 • Making clusters with familiar lexis on a particular topic
- 116 • Working with more complex word puzzles
- 117 • Working with more complex crosswords
- 118 • Purposeful listening and reading texts (e.g. a beginning is done, end is  
119 unknown, giving prognosis of action development)
- 120 • Playful exercises with color cards (e.g. students have one blue and  
121 one red card. Teacher says verbs or names with special grammar or spelling features.  
122 Students have to show red or blue card. This way a teacher has a feedback about the  
123 acquisition of the new lexical or grammatical material.
- 124 • Playful exercises with making a guess about a word meaning

125 Using words of different roots (e.g. students: people who study at schools and  
126 university/ people who have to learn but very often they don’t want to do this etc.)

- 127 • Using relevant language games for the level
- 128 • Preparation and presentation of projects on topics interesting for the  
129 students; competition in a group/ between groups about the best project on given topic
- 130 • Playful techniques and devices: using pictures and flashcards for  
131 stimulation of speaking; using gestures and pantomime; reading with change of  
132 rhythm and dynamics; chain reading; collecting separated parts of phrases or texts;  
133 including competitive element in exercises (*Who says this quickly and correctly? Who*  
134 *writes more words with B in 2 minutes?*); when correcting the mistakes the teacher  
135 uses the “echo” technique (he says the correct form in a quieter voice, a technique of  
136 question repetition which includes a correct form etc.)

137 At the advanced stage of language education of adult students we recommend to use the  
138 activities mentioned above for the middle stage and additionally the following activities:

- 139 • Constructing longer and more complex texts
- 140 • Creating quizzes on foreign culture, history, economy
- 141 • Making stories on a subject matter picture on a particular topic,  
142 competition for the best student story (original subject matter and correct language,  
143 individual and group work)
- 144 • Composing in 2-3 minutes new words on the basis of one long word,  
145 using only letters in the long word (e.g. word *telecommunication*)
- 146 • Exercises with associations (e.g. *In 2 minutes find 3 common features*  
147 *between 2 words which are not close to each other as a meaning (e.g. clouds &*  
148 *friends)/ Draw and describe your associations connected with colors: red, blue,*  
149 *orange, green etc.*
- 150 • Playing more complex language games

- 151 • Playing simulative games with problem solving relevant to character of
- 152 language education (e.g. *making slogans for advertisement of products or services,*
- 153 *guide narrative about sightseeing of particular city etc.*)
- 154 • Competition of text translation between students of a group at the
- 155 university: (fiction, scientific, advertisement texts)
- 156 • Presentation in a group of the projects on well known topics which are
- 157 close to students' interests, evaluation by students and teacher of the most original as
- 158 an idea and the most correct as a language project (e.g. *My new business idea etc.*)

159 In addition to the above mentioned playful techniques at advanced stage we also recommend  
 160 using video clips and parts of movies for discussion in a group in order to stimulate speaking activity;  
 161 including competition element in exercises like this: *Who says/writes text without mistakes? with less*  
 162 *mistakes? (ex. advertisement about a product or service)*

163 At all stages of learning the game has an important place in the teaching process. We  
 164 recommend to keep the above given proportion between learning activities and to use actively game  
 165 activities in a teaching process. It is possible to transform traditional language and speech exercises  
 166 into playful by involving an element of speed, competition, expressiveness, using imagination, artistic  
 167 and intellectual skills. Game in education is always connected with creativity, live and joyful  
 168 communication. Useful examples of language games in adult education are presented on the site of  
 169 Erasmus+ project "Learning games. Exchange of good practices in adult education"[9] and in many  
 170 other resources. [10,11,12,13,14,15]

## 171 Conclusion

172 Learning game in the foreign language learning process is a real challenge to the intellect and  
 173 emotions of adult students. Game activities stimulate not only speaking or writing skills but cognitive,  
 174 creative, social and intercultural skills as well. In our opinion the game is a great educational  
 175 phenomenon which has to be actively used in the foreign language education of adult students. We  
 176 hope that our definition of game and practical instructions given in this article are useful for foreign  
 177 language teachers and for further researches on undiscovered potential of game in language  
 178 education of adults.  
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